

## Page issues 2013 Call to Prayer across SBC

**NASHVILLE (BP)** — Frank S. Page, president and chief executive officer of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee in Nashville, is asking Southern Baptists to come together in 2013 for a year of emphasis on prayer "like none we've ever seen before."

"For some time, God has been burdening my heart about prayer and spiritual awakening," Page wrote in a Dec. 11 first-

person article in Baptist Press. "I talked about this a great deal when I was president of the Southern Baptist Convention (2006-08). I saw then what was happening in our nation, in our churches and in our convention. That deep sense of need for revival in our land has only gotten stronger over these past six years."



PAGE

This is not a new message for Page. On the SBC President's page, posted after his election in 2006, Page wrote, "Across the nation I have spoken about the three 'R's'. I have thanked God for the push for doctrinal rightness. I thank God for the conservative resurgence which has brought us to this point. However, we must,

with equal passion, attack the issues of relevancy and revival. If we do not have God's reviving hand upon us, we will move into a precipitous decline from which we will never recover."

Page will be enlisting others to help elevate the call to prayer throughout the

see PRAYER on p. 5

## Christmas Day surprise



**STORM'S AFTERMATH** — Mississippi Baptist disaster relief volunteers were called into action on Christmas Day, after extensive damage was reported from several lines of intense, tornado-bearing thunderstorms that moved through south Mississippi. A number of homes were damaged or destroyed during the severe weather. (BR special photo by Don Gann)

## Miss. Baptists respond to storms, tornadoes

By Tony Martin  
Associate Editor

Mississippi Baptist disaster relief volunteers were mobilized on Christmas Day after multiple lines of intense thunderstorms, some with embedded tornadoes, swept through south Mississippi and caused extensive damage in several areas.

According to Don Gann, consultant in the Men's Ministry Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board in Jackson, volunteer members of the Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief Task Force were activated and responded within 24 hours.

"We mobilized to Pearl Riv-

er County where the greatest damage was," said Gann. "The rest of the damage was pretty sporadic. We sent three chainsaw teams in and they worked for a day and a half. The volunteers stayed at the Pearl River Association lodge. We had groups from Yalobusha Association, Pearl River Association, Gulf Coast Association and Temple Church in Hattiesburg. They worked about 12 jobs, mostly clearing yards and trees and providing tarps."

"It was Christmas afternoon, and two heavy lines of storms came through about 3:30 or 4," said Carl Myers, associational missions director, Pearl River Association.

"The tornado probably came in with these lines, although another bad line came in after dark. The tornado came in on the west side of the town of McNeil. There were 34 houses damaged in Pearl River County, and 17 of those were totaled. Some didn't even have any walls standing. There were a lot of trees down."

"Eighteen people were transported to the Picayune hospital, and several more were transported to Hattiesburg," Myers continued. "Some were transported by ambulance, but other folks just had cuts and bruises and went by car."

"The tornado also touched down and damaged an outbuilding and carports of some mobile homes near the Millard exit on the interstate," Myers said. "There was also

see TORNADES on p. 6

## Islamist terrorists target Christians in Christmas attacks across Nigeria

**NASHVILLE (BP and local reports)** — At least 43 Christians were murdered by Nigerian Islamists in a killing spree that spanned the Christmas season just ended.

Boko Haram jihadists, based in Nigeria, are blamed for increased religious persecution in that African country, including the murders of those 43 Christians and the wounding of many others in several year-end incidents, religious freedom watchdog groups have reported.

In two separate Christmas Eve attacks, 12 Christians including a pastor were killed and numerous others wounded at churches in Borno and Yobe states in Nigeria, according to reports from Christian Solidarity Worldwide, International Christian Concern, and Morning Star News.

In the week following Christmas, 10 Christians were killed and five injured in various attacks on villages in Nigeria's Plateau state, Adeniyi Ojutiku, a U.S. associate of the Young Wing Christian Association of Nigeria, told Baptist Press.

Olasupo Ayokunle, president and chief executive officer of the Nigerian Baptist Convention (NBC), said the targeted slaughter of Christians at their homes is unprecedented. "We have never faced this type of selective destruction before," he said in a Baptist World Alliance (BWA) press release. "Continue to pray for the church in Nigeria."

The NBC has spent more than \$100,000 on relief efforts for those affected by the

"We have never faced this type of selective destruction before. Continue to pray for the church in Nigeria."

**Olasupo Ayokunle**  
president and chief executive officer of the Nigerian Baptist Convention

violence, the BWA reported. Many observers have blamed the violence on the Boko Haram, a Muslim terrorist group that has vowed to eradicate Christianity from Nigeria and impose a

see NIGERIA on p. 6

### Inside this issue

Directions

Sunday School

Lessons

Editorial

Bibliography

How to Buy

a Christian

Revivals

Homecoming

Just for the

Classifieds

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## From the editor

WILLIAM PERKINS

### Making life complicated

There are many reasons all around us for doing the right thing. There are the obvious reasons, such as social sanctions like prison time and civil judgments. There are health reasons, such as the avoidance of microscopic, lethal diseases as a result of illicit or immoral activities. Lastly and most importantly, there are eternal reasons for doing the right thing, as expressed throughout the Bible.

Yet mankind seems determined to choose the wrong way, with all its attendant consequences. Are we programmed to arrive at the bad decisions that we already know will make life so much more complicated and difficult, when the right way is clearly laid out for us to follow?

Thomas and Nancy Beatie were "married" nine years ago. The word, "married," is wrapped in quotation marks because of the unusual nature of their union.

Thomas and Nancy are both women, biologically speaking. In our perverse, modern American culture, it's not all that unusual for two people of the same gender to declare themselves "married," but Thomas and Nancy decided to add another, rather extraordinary twist to their relationship.

Thomas underwent extensive hormonal therapy and sex reassignment surgery to remake herself male, complete with the external physical attributes of a man. Again, even this decision is not all that unusual in our mixed-up culture. However, she (he?) demanded that her (his?) internal and external female sex organs remain intact and in place, so she (he?) could bear children during the "marriage" to Nancy.

The process by which a woman and a converted, part male/part female person conceived children is not something that can be published in a family newspaper like *The Baptist Record*, but they managed to bring forth three physically normal children after an initial miscarriage.

Thomas and Nancy turned into overnight news media darlings, with Thomas hailed as the first man to ever give birth and a harbinger of the future of family relations. On her widely syndicated television show, Oprah gushed support for the couple as she touched Thomas' protrud-

ing belly. Thomas even wrote a memoir of her (his?) pregnancy entitled, *Labor of Love*.

That was then. News media last week reported that Thomas and Nancy have decided to split and have filed divorce papers in Arizona. However, Family Court Judge Douglas Gerlach is a tad bit confused about the circumstances. Are Thomas and Nancy legally "married" under Arizona law, which doesn't recognize same sex marriages? The couple says yes, because Thomas is a man and Nancy is a woman. The judge isn't so sure, since Thomas wasn't born a man and hasn't lived as a man all that long.

What about the female reproductive organs that Thomas kept, although she (he?) wanted to be a man in all other ways? What determines who is legally a man, or legally a woman? The status of the children is equally unclear. Although Thomas plans to raise the children as a single parent, which parent is she (he?)? The children reportedly call him "Daddy," but isn't she (he?) really their mother, both legally and biologically?

Such is the state of our culture today. As we hurtle toward the social approval and legalization of everything (polygamy, pedophilia, bestiality, and drug normalization, for examples), questions like the ones raised in the Beatie "marriage" and divorce will seem tame.

Wouldn't it be better for us if we simply conducted ourselves as God tells us to do in His Holy Word? Wouldn't it be better to respect God's established definition of marriage, than to devise our own versions? Wouldn't it be better to bring children into the world under God's social and spiritual plans for both the parents and children?

Wouldn't it be better if Christians lived by the Bible, rather than allowing secular courts and legislative bodies to define the things upon which we apparently cannot agree? Wouldn't it be better if we each had the backbone to stand on the Word alone, without wavering before the eyes of the world?

As we have learned to the detriment of our cause (Matt. 28:18-20), talk is cheap. Let's get started doing the right thing in the time we have before Jesus returns.

## A peek into Miss. Baptists' future

Two out of three Mississippians are unchurched. At least, most of these and many of the church are lost and without Christ as Savior.

These Mississippians are the very people for whom Jesus came and died. Jesus tells us in Luke 19:10 (KJV), "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Jesus has commissioned us in the first chapter of Acts and the last verses of the Gospel of Matthew to go and make disciples — but the question is, how are we doing at making disciples and baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit? With 72% of our Mississippi churches plateaued or declining, there is a real question as to how we are doing.

One of the obstacles to doing better is that it is very hard to take people who are set in their ways of not openly witnessing and get them to start boldly sharing their faith. What is the future of Mississippi? Jesus gives us a strong clue where to find a positive answer in the first verses of Matthew 18, when he called forward a child and had him stand in front of them and said: "Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

To begin to find a positive answer to our question about the future of our state, we need to look to our children. Let's turn our attention to the Christian preteens (older children in grades four, five, & six) in our churches. I believe they are the future of Mississippi and the future of our churches. They are open to learning to witness boldly to their friends, schoolmates, and families, but we must intentionally support and train them: "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it," Proverbs 22:6 (KJV).

Luke 2:41-52 tells us that when Jesus was the age of our preteens, He took on the role of an active participant in his faith, asking and answering spiritual questions. We want to help these Christian preteens succeed in their God-given roles as leaders and witnesses. Preteens need to be challenged to follow the example of Jesus when He went to the temple with His mother and Joseph as a preteen.

Paul told young Timothy, "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example



### Guest opinion

with Don Hicks

of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity," 1 Timothy 4:12 (KJV). The Apostle Paul was developing the same concept as Proverbs 20:11 (KJV): "Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right."

Paul also told young Timothy: "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord," 2 Timothy 1:7-8a (KJV).

Jesus shows us in Matthew 11 that the wisdom of this world is not as deep as the revelation God chooses to give children. Matthew 11:25-26 (NIV) states, "At that time Jesus said, 'I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure.'"

Let me try to make some very practical suggestions that will give us an extremely positive answer to our question about the future of Mississippi. First, each church needs to give attention to teaching a new Christian class for all children who accept Christ in their church — but our discipling of preteens must not stop there. We must train them to be confident witnesses to their faith.

Three Mississippi Baptist pastors, Clarence Cooper at Brandon Church, Brandon; Paul Middleton at Calvary Church, Batesville; and David Aultman at First Church, Gautier have lead their churches to host Discipleship Rallies that teach preteens to witness.

These preteen witnessing rallies have also been supported and promoted by

see HICKS on p. 7

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# In cliff compromise, charities win some, lose some

**WASHINGTON (BP and local reports)** — Churches, religious organizations, other nonprofits, and their donors avoided the worst of the proposed restrictions on charitable deductions in the "fiscal cliff" legislation signed Jan. 2 by U.S. President Barack Obama, but they did not fully escape its effects.

The U.S. Congress approved, and the president quickly signed, the bill to avoid the expiration of tax cuts for most Americans, as well as automatic reductions of \$55 billion each to defense and non-defense spending.

Mississippi Senators Thad Cochran and Roger Wicker, both Republicans, voted for the fiscal cliff legislation. Mississippi Congressmen Alan Nunnelee, Greg Harper, and Steven Palazzo, all Republicans, voted against the legislation while Bennie Thompson, a Democrat, voted in favor.

The new law does not include a flat percentage cap on charitable giving, but it does reinstitute a limitation on itemized deductions for higher-income Americans. The measure contains what is known as the Pease limitation, which affects individuals with incomes of at least \$250,000 and married couples filing taxes jointly with incomes of \$300,000 or more. The limit reduces charitable and other itemized deductions by three percent of the amount by which adjusted gross income surpasses those thresholds.

Religious and nonprofit organizations expressed disappointment the Pease limitation was reinstated but seemed relieved that more severe restrictions were avoided. Leaders in both political parties had suggested further restrictions on charitable deductions. Those proposals "could have cost charities billions of dollars in contributions," said the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (ECFA) in a written statement.

The law not only reinstated the Pease limitation but made it permanent beginning in 2013 "to the disappointment of many in the charitable sector," ECFA said.

The Independent Sector — a coalition of about 600 charities, foundations and corporate philanthropy programs — was glad no flat percentage restriction was approved. Its president expressed anxiety, however, about how the Pease limit, in conjunction with the new law's increased taxes on higher-income Americans, would affect giving.

"We are concerned," Diana Aviv said, according to The Wall Street Journal. "The big question for us

now is, if we are [also] increasing rates on folks... does the combination create a greater disincentive for people to give?"

Both organizations expressed gratitude the new law extends for a year an individual retirement account (IRA) rollover provision that enables seniors at least six months beyond their 70th birthday to donate as much as \$100,000 from their IRAs to nonprofits without paying income tax on the contribution.

ECFA and Independent Sector acknowledged, however, they expect charitable deductions to be a topic of consideration as Congress debates the debt ceiling.

Richard Land, president of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention in Nashville, warned in November that the more restrictive recommendations to cap charitable deductions seriously threatened religious organizations.

"This would be catastrophic in its impact, particularly on those large gifts that many religious organizations, colleges, universities, and ministries, as well as churches, depend upon for continuing operations," Land said. "Everything we know from past experience tells us if they cap deductions it will seriously erode charitable giving."

Enacting such limitations would not only reduce giving to churches and charities but would harm services such organizations provide to the needy, said Land and other foes of capping such deductions.

In his budgets, Obama has proposed capping the itemized deduction at 28% for couples whose incomes are at least \$250,000 and indi-

viduals who make at least \$200,000 a year. High-income earners now can deduct at least 33% in charitable gifts.

The Pease limitation is named for its prime congressional promoter, Rep. Donald Pease, D-Ohio. Pease served in the House of Representatives from 1977-93. Congress enacted the limit in 1990 but rescinded it gradually beginning in 2001. Its repeal was complete in 2010.

**Gifts to Charity**

If you made a gift and got a benefit for it, see page A-7.

16

17

18

## Proponents applaud permanent status for adoption tax credit

"Every child deserves a protective, loving family, and I hope that a permanent Adoption Tax Credit will enable many more families to open their hearts and homes to a child in need."

Sen. Mary Landrieu  
D-La.

**WASHINGTON (BP)** — The so-called "fiscal cliff" bill passed by the U.S. Congress and signed by U.S. President Barack Obama last week didn't fully please either political party, but it did contain positive news for the adoption community by maintaining a tax credit that makes adoption more affordable for low- and middle-income families.

The adoption tax credit was set to expire at the end of the year, and for months the adoption community had been lobbying Congress to extend it. The House and Senate did even better than that, making the credit permanent under the bill passed just before the New Year, according to the office of Sen. Mary Landrieu, D-La., an adoption advocate.

Unlike a tax deduction, which only reduces taxable income, a tax credit actually reduces a person's tax liability. Last year the adoption tax credit was a maximum of \$13,360.

Under Internal Revenue Service (IRS) rules, an adoptive family can claim adoption expenses — court costs and adoption agency fees, among others — up to the maximum amount allowed under the credit.

For instance, this means if an adoptive family owes \$10,000 in federal taxes for a year, and their adoption cost \$10,000, then they would owe no taxes for that one year, likely resulting in a large IRS refund. Families have up to five years to obtain the full credit.

Many adoptions, though, cost much more — \$20,000 and up is common — and the tax credit simply makes an expensive adoption more affordable.

"Every child deserves a protective, loving family, and I hope that a permanent Adoption Tax Credit will enable many more families to open their hearts and homes to a child in need," Landrieu said in a statement to Baptist Press.

"Though making this credit a permanent part of our tax code is an important accomplishment, I will continue to work to improve the Adoption Tax Credit and to make it refundable to better assist Americans adopting out of the foster care system."

Making the refund permanent would allow families to claim the credit beyond their tax liability, a move that would particularly benefit lower-income families.

Many pro-life groups consider adoption as the most viable alternative to abortion.

Bill J. Blacquiére, president of the Bethany Christian Services adoption agency, had been following progress on the issue for months.

"It came down to the last minute, but we're thrilled Congress finally decided to extend the adoption tax credit," Blacquiére told Baptist Press. "While legislation is still being reviewed for final implementation, we're also excited with the deci-

sion to make the adoption tax credit permanent.

"This will ease the minds of adoptive families across the country. We appreciate Congress' continued support in trying to ensure that vulnerable children can experience the love of a forever family."

Blacquiére previously had said he feared fewer families would adopt if the tax credit wasn't renewed. "I think there would be a lot of families who could not afford adoption," he said in August.

"Even now, with the adoption tax credit, there are families who are taking out loans. They are doing second mortgages. You take away the credit, and they probably couldn't even get the loans."



Recently, on one of those days when I had to get a number of things done, I was up before four o'clock. I turned on the television, mainly to find out what they were saying about the weather and what it might be doing around our area later on during the day. When the television came on, there was an ad being run. As I watched it, I thought this must be the late night comedians continuing their shows. The ad was about Perfect Polly. To give you the gist of the ad, it told about a bird that could change the atmosphere in a room or a home. Basically, it was saying that everyone needs to have a bird in their house. They even dealt with the problems that a bird can create like the need for a cage, food, and some of the mess that a bird can make which must be cleaned up constantly. Oh, but wait because that was not the case with Perfect Polly. As I listened to the ad, I got more and more interested as it continued. It was not because I wanted a parakeet in my house, but because I thought they could not be serious, but they were.

Perfect Polly was a little parakeet size, mechanical bird that came in several different colors and would not mess up anything. The bird came with a little stand where she could sit, talk and sing to you. Or you could even hold Perfect Polly on your finger and talk to the bird. I thought, "You have got to be kidding!" No, they were not! For \$14.95 plus shipping and handling, you could get the bird in the color of your choice and have Perfect Polly sent to your home.

The ad went off and I never saw the weather. I moved on to dealing with my own responsibilities in getting ready for the day, but I kept being haunted by the thought if this was what the world had come to be. I thought about the days when kids would get out in the yard in the afternoon after school and throw a football or baseball and interact with each other. Now they sit down before a TV or their own game box, punch buttons, and watch figures run back and forth in a computer generated game. A few weeks later when they get tired of that game, they want another version of a whiz bang sport. I thought about how people used to have friends



## Perfect Polly

and social interaction. Now if that is what you would like to do, you can just go on a website, fill out the information, and they will match you up with someone who is compatible to your likes, dislikes, books, and interest. Punch the button and you can find out if love and romance is just on the other side of your iPad.

I thought how sad that personal relationships have been thrown into a pot of pseudo friendships where people who somewhat know each other or maybe don't know each other at all discuss things, tell facts, and express their opinions and desires to people who if they were in the room with them they might not even speak. Now if none of those things work for you, we have the answer for your life's dilemma — Perfect Polly. This may come to you as a shock, but if you sit around all day with a mechanical bird perched on your finger that is talking and singing to you and you are talking back, may I just suggest that you may have issues far worse than you think. As my day progressed, I looked back on that early morning advertisement and three words came to my mind.

**The first one was need.** I wondered if there was really a need in the population across our nation that could be filled by a chirping, talking, mechanical bird. I wondered who else in the world was up at four o'clock watching that commercial. I wondered how many people were moved into thinking that is the answer for the problems in my life

and called a toll-free number or logged on to a computer to get Perfect Polly. In a world of genuine need and deep hurts, of incredible loneliness, and unsolvable situations, Jesus Christ comes into our human frailties to bring hope, new life, forgiveness, peace with God, and life everlasting. Apparently, some people are looking for a battery driven parakeet to solve their problems.

Have we gotten to the place where we present the wonder of the life giving Jesus so poorly that people do not pay Him any attention? Or maybe they think that our preaching, teaching, and sharing the power of God in Christ is nothing more than religious jargon, and they just turn a deaf ear and walk away. Maybe we have talked about Him, witnessed of His grace, tried to express the depths of His love, and then turned around and lived lives so out of character with what He came to do that people may think that we need a mechanical bird chirping in our rooms in order to bring peace.

**Then I thought about a second word that kept mulling around in my brain and that was deed.** Perfect Polly is pretty amazing or at least on TV it was. It would sit perched on a stand with its head going from left to right, chirping, and saying things. It would not mess up the floor, scatter seed hulls, or cause any problems unless by chance the constant chattering and chirping drove you crazy. Perfect Polly would perch on your finger, and

you could walk around in the house and show it to your family or friends, if you had any. That in itself is a pretty remarkable feat. But that kind of deed soon wears off and the impact and encouragement is soon lost. Then what do you do?

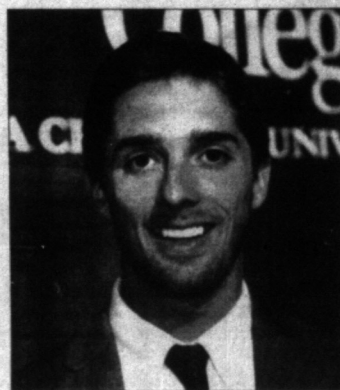
The story of the church is not just the story of gathering together on Sunday morning and enduring a sermon. It is the living body of Christ caring for one another and meeting the needs in the lives of those around them. As Paul wrote to the Galatians he said, "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2).

**The third word that came to my mind was proceed.** Is this the future? I guess in time with advanced technology, we can just kind of build the social community that we want to have around us and turn the switch on when we want to and off when we do not want to be bothered by them. I suppose that if some young man wanted to start a church and he could get some resources together, he could build a small building, put seats in it, and purchase a congregation to fill it. Then he could just turn on a switch and they would sing whatever song he would like. You could have a music disc for contemporary folks or you could have a different disc for traditional folks. You could have one that was scratchy and off key for the people who could not sing. To affirm the truth that was being presented, every once in a while you could have some people in the congregation programmed to say, "Amen!" You could have at least one of them programmed to come by after the service to complain about the temperature being either too hot or too cold. It may be expensive, but you could order a whole Baptist church.

Is that where life is proceeding for us? Of course, it is not! We remain sinful and needy human beings. God remains the author of help, hope, and the One who sent His only begotten Son to save us and put us in touch with a living community of faith that will bless us. God, thank you for your Son and for His living church!

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## College News



Josh Carver, **MISSISSIPPI COLLEGE'S** Student Government Association president, will be recognized with other students from around Mississippi at the annual HEAD-WAE program Feb. 26 in Jackson. The state Legislature created the program to honor individual academic achievement and the overall contributions of the state's public and private institutions of higher learning.

## Revivals & Homecomings

► **Corinth Church, Heidelberg:** Revival, Jan. 20 - 23; Sun., 10 a.m.; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; Steve Stone, speaker.

## CLASSIFIEDS

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**COUNTY LINE BAPTIST CHURCH, OVETT IS SEEKING A FULL-TIME PASTOR.** We are 24 miles south of Laurel and 25 miles east of Hattiesburg. Resumes may be sent to Pastor Search Committee, 152 Herman Phillips Road, Ovett, MS 39464.

**PINE GROVE BAPTIST CHURCH IS SEEKING A BI-VOCATIONAL "ASSOCIATE PASTOR/YOUTH MINISTER."** Please send resume to Pine Grove Baptist Church, 124 Gather Johnson Rd., Magee, MS 39111.

**SOUTH LOUISVILLE BAPTIST CHURCH, IN LOUISVILLE, MS IS SEEKING A PART-TIME MUSIC MINISTER.** Please mail resumes to South Louisville Baptist Church, 933 South Church Avenue in Louisville, Ms 39339. (attention Music Search Committee) You can also e-mail resumes to [bro.jaudon@gmail.com](mailto:bro.jaudon@gmail.com).

**IMMANUEL BAPTIST CHURCH, NATCHEZ, MS, IS ACCEPTING RESUMES FOR A FULL TIME PASTOR.** Please mail resumes/tape to Immanuel Baptist Church 684 Hwy 61 North Natchez, Ms. 39120 Attn: Pastor Search Committee



What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the

# HOUSE TOPS.

Matthew 10:27 NAS

January 10, 2013

HouseTops is a Baptist Record supplement produced by the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board's Communication Services.



## 2013 STATE EVANGELISM CONFERENCE

### "TOGETHER FOR CHRIST"

JANUARY 27-28, 2013  
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH  
RICHLAND, MISSISSIPPI

						
JIM FUTRAL	JUNIOR HILL	MICHAEL CATT	CHUCK KELLEY	BOB PITMAN	SAMMY GILBREATH	KARA BLACKARD

## STATE PREACHING CONFERENCE

April 22 — Mississippi College, Clinton  
led by Wayne VanHorn

April 23 — Blue Mountain College, Blue Mountain  
led by Ronald Meeks

April 24 — William Carey University, Hattiesburg  
led by Daniel Caldwell

The book of Revelation — "Together for Christ"  
8:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Contact **Keith Gordon** for more information,  
1-800-748-1651, ext. 307, or 601-292-3307.

**Registration requested.**

Pastor/Leadership Development Department

## MISSIONS WEEKEND EVENT!

FOR ALL GIRLS  
7TH-12TH  
GRADES AND  
THEIR LEADERS

March 1-2, 2013

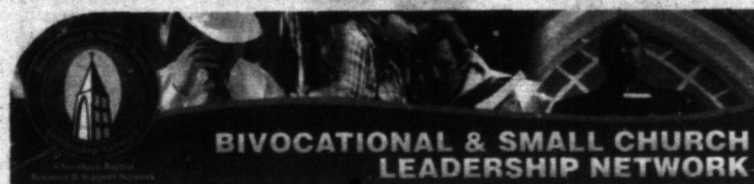
# Ignite

GARAYWA CAMP &  
CONFERENCE CENTER

**Cost: \$58**

(includes program fee, t-shirt,  
meals, lodging in cabins)

Contact Tammy Anderson:  
601-292-3323 or tanderson@mbcb.org



## BIVOCATIONAL & SMALL CHURCH LEADERSHIP NETWORK

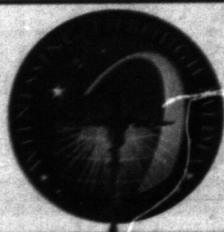
**April 18-20, 2013**

Mississippi Baptist and William Carey University will host the  
National Bivo/Small Church Celebration.

Pastors and wives across the nation will join with us in fellowship,  
inspiration, and affirmation.

For reservations contact **Cathy Taylor**, 601-292-3305,  
cwtaylor@mbcb.org, or **Dale Holloway**, 601-845-2107





## WITNESSING THROUGH MEDIA

### *Awards Banquet & Workshop*

MAY 3 - 4, 2013

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH.

RIDGELAND, MISS.

#### **Awards Competition:**

- Entries in the Award Competition must have been produced or aired between April 1, 2012, and March 1, 2013

- Awards entry deadline is March 8, 2013

- Awards entry cost \$15 per entry

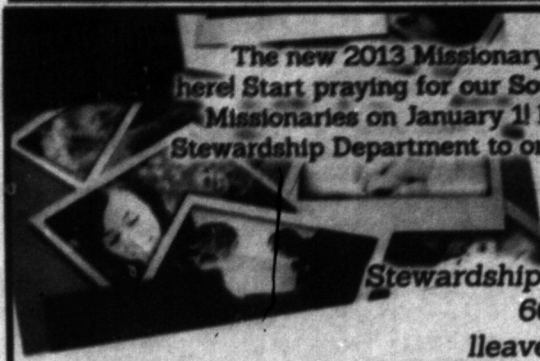
#### **Banquet and Workshop:**

- Banquet and workshop registration deadline is April 19, 2013

- Registration for all activities is \$30 per person

- Friday Awards Banquet only or Saturday Workshop only is \$25 per person

*Watch for more information coming to you soon!*



The new 2013 Missionary Moments are here! Start praying for our Southern Baptist Missionaries on January 1! Please contact Stewardship Department to order a copy for your church.

Lisa Leavell  
Stewardship Department  
601-292-3347  
lleavell@mbcb.org

## Church Building Conference/Lifeway Church Architecture

March 19, 2013

Skyroom, MBCB Baptist Building

8:30 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Provide key leaders with quality church facility information. Registration requested. Please contact the Pastor/Leadership Development Dept., 1-800-748-1651, ext. 305, 601-292-3305 or cwtaylor@mbcb.org.

# 2013 SUMMER CAMP GARAYWA

WWW.GARAYWA.ORG

Registration is now open  
for 2013 summer camp sessions  
and for Day Camp!

Missions Camp for Girls &  
Missions Camp for Students

- \$165 per camper

Day Camp for Boys & Girls

- \$20 per camper per day

For more info,  
please call Karen 601-924-7034  
Registration available online.

[www.garaywa.org](http://www.garaywa.org)

## 2013 Week Day Education

February 9

8 a.m. - 12:45 p.m.

Highland BC, Meridian

March 2

8 a.m. - 12:45 p.m.

Ridgecrest BC, Madison

**Registration in advance required:**

**Cost \$15 per conferee**

Checks for registration fees should be payable to the  
**Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.**

Center Directors, Pastors, & Children's Ministers  
accompanying their teachers are **FREE.**

**4 hours of Health Department Approved Training**

**Discipleship and Family Ministry**

PO Box 530, Jackson MS 39205

dhicks@mbcb.org



## PASTORS & WORSHIP LEADERS WORKSHOP

"Together for Christ in Worship"



Alan Woodward



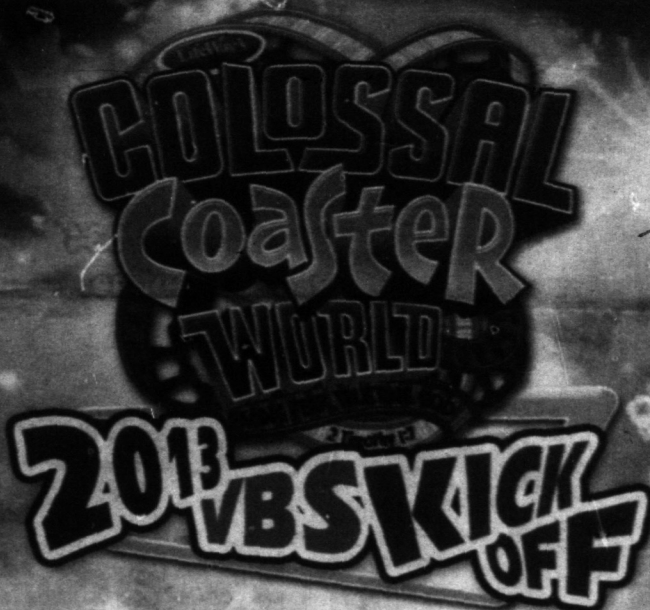
March 4, 2013  
Agricola BC, Lucedale  
9 am - noon



Slater Murphy

Led by Alan Woodward, director of the Pastor/Leadership Development Dept., and Slater Murphy, director of the Church Music Dept., MBCB

Registration requested. Please contact the Pastor/Leadership Development Dept., 1-800-748-1651, ext. 305, 601-292-3305 or [cwtaylor@mbcb.org](mailto:cwtaylor@mbcb.org).



Learn how to challenge kids to face their fears and trust God as they zip along the roller coaster of life. Through every twist and turn, we'll examine how to help them live with a spirit of power, love, and sound judgement.

**FEBRUARY 28, 2013**

**6:30 - 8:30 P.M.**

**LONGVIEW HEIGHTS**

**OLIVE BRANCH, MISS.**

**MARCH 2, 2013**

**9 A.M. - NOON**

**FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH**

**RICHLAND, MISS.**

VBS materials will be on display and available to purchase from LifeWay Christian Resources.

An overview of LifeWay Curriculum, Worship Rally, Crafts, and Snacks

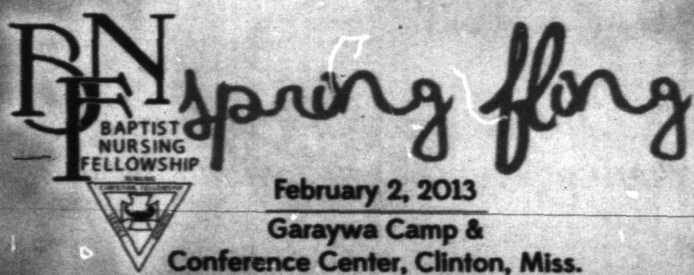
Training Sessions for Evangelism, Promotion, and Decorations

For more information contact Angie Boydston at [a Boydston@mbcb.org](mailto:a Boydston@mbcb.org) or

Jo Wasson at [jwasson@mbcb.org](mailto:jwasson@mbcb.org)

or call 1-800-748-1651, ext. 292, or 601-292-3292

Mississippi Baptist Convention Board • P.O. Box 530 • Jackson, MS 39205



February 2, 2013

Garaywa Camp &  
Conference Center, Clinton, Miss.

Don't miss an opportunity to join nurses from all over the state as we worship, fellowship and share ways to serve Christ. For more information contact, Denise Windom, [denisewindom@bellsouth.net](mailto:denisewindom@bellsouth.net) or Deborah Bolian, [bolian@mc.edu](mailto:bolian@mc.edu).



Tuesday, January 29, 2013  
First Baptist Church, Richland  
(601) 939-1715

- |            |  |
|------------|--|
| 8:00 a.m.  | Registration/Refreshments  |
| 8:15 a.m.  | Early Bird Special "Putting Wit Back into Witnessing"<br>Led by Judy Marby, ventriloquist from Destin, Fla.  |
| 8:45 a.m.  | General Assembly   |
| 9:00 a.m.  | Break-Outs   |
|            | 1. <u>Good for Goodness Sake</u> — Exploring Seven Values that lead to authentic character. Discover that true goodness is what people are looking for. Led by Eileen Mitchell, Senior Adult consultant for Alabama Baptist Convention |
|            | 2. <u>A Senior that God can Use</u> — Applying the Word in an older person's life to be a witness. Led by Sonny Adkins, Mendenhall, retired State Evangelism director  |
|            | 3. <u>Your Prayer Closet</u> — Evaluating your prayer life. Led by Kevin Meador, Decatur, director of Prayer Closet Ministries   |
|            | 4. <u>Putting Wit Back into Witnessing</u> — Led by Judy Marby   |
| 10:00 a.m. | Break  |
| 10:30 a.m. | Worship Celebration Rally<br>Music: Allen Harris, Music Evangelist, Oxford<br>Piano: Irene Martin, Harpersville<br>Preacher: Sammy Gilbreath, Evangelism director, Alabama Baptist Convention  |
| 11:45 a.m. | Adjourn  |

Pray this day for...

January 11 – January 24, 2013

*"...but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your request be made know to God"*  
-Philippians 4:6

Pray for: **Earl\* & Ramona Hewitt**, missionaries to Sub-Saharan African Peoples in the U.S. through medicine and church/home outreach and evangelism.

Pray for: **Raymond\* & Cynthia Hodgins**, missionaries ministering to Deaf Peoples in the U.S. through sports evangelism, church/home outreach and evangelism.

Pray for: **Jeffrey\* & Llesia\* Holman**, IMB missionaries ministering to American Peoples in Peru through community outreach, church/home outreach and evangelism.

Pray for: **Janet\* Hol-loway**, missionaries ministering to European Peoples in Russia through student evangelism.

Pray for: **Claudia\* & Daniel Hood**, missionaries ministering to Sub-Saharan African Peoples in Kenya through church/home outreach and evangelism.

Pray for: **Clarence Frank & Phoebe Harrison**, missionaries ministering to American Peoples in Honduras through church planting and church/home evangelism.

Pray for: **Brian & Felicia\* Henderson**, missionaries ministering to American Peoples in Peru through regional office support, church/home outreach and evangelism.

Pray for: **Don\* & Valery Hulsey**, missionaries ministering to European Peoples in Portugal through church planting, church/home outreach and evangelism.

Pray for: **Denita\* & Tony\* Inmon**, missionaries to American Peoples in Uruguay through church planting and church/home outreach and evangelism.

Pray for: **Floyd\* & Sharon\* Johnston**, missionaries to American Peoples in Brazil through church planting and church/home outreach and evangelism.

Pray for: **Susan\* & Millard Jones**, missionaries to East Asian & European Peoples in Canada through student evangelism.

Pray for: **John\* & Melinda\* Kyzar**, missionaries ministering to European Peoples in the Czech Republic through "personalization" and church/home outreach.

Pray for: **Henry\* & Linda Lee**, missionaries ministering to East Asian Peoples in the U.S. through church planting, church/home outreach and evangelism.

Pray for: **Rebecca\* & Timothy\* Lightsey**, missionaries ministering to American Peoples in the U.S. through strategy coordination, church/home outreach and evangelism.

\*These International Mission Board missionaries claim Mississippi as their home state. The IMB missionaries listed in the HouseTops prayer calendar are currently active in 2-4 year terms of career service.

## Mother/Daughter Overnight at Garaywa

Registration is now open!

1st-6th grade girls and their moms will spend quiet time together, worship & praise, meet missionaries, make crafts and more! Join the fun and fellowship this spring!

April 5-6, 2013

Garaywa Camp and Conference Center

\$50 per person

For more information

[www.garaywa.org](http://www.garaywa.org)

or call Karen, 601-924-7034

## STATE MINISTRY ASSISTANTS CONFERENCE

April 8-9

Garaywa Camp & Conference Center, Clinton  
10 a.m. Monday - 4 p.m. Tuesday

Registration is required.

For more information, contact Cathy Taylor,  
1-800-748-1651, ext. 305, or 601-292-3305

Pastor/Leadership Development Department

Miss Laura Wingo  
3/1/01  
Parents: Floyd & Sylvia  
South America

Miss R. R.  
3/2/09  
Parents: J & K  
Restricted

Miss Lulie Adair  
3/6/09  
Parents: James & Mary Margaret  
Sub-Saharan African Peoples

Mr. Blake  
3/7/07  
Parents: J & M  
Restricted

Miss Hanna C.  
3/11/93  
Parents: J. & M.  
Restricted

Mr. Charlie S.  
3/13/05  
Parents: J & C  
Restricted

Miss Emma Grace Epps  
3/17/03  
Parents: Aaron & Tiffany  
South America

Miss Emma Cox  
3/25/08  
Parents: Jeremy & Kimberly  
Restricted

Miss Heather Beaman  
3/28/92  
Parents: Brad & Lenora  
Last Frontier

Miss Grace Holyfield  
3/31/93  
Parents: Michael & Patsy  
European Peoples

January Birthday  
Miss Ryleigh Roberts  
1/4/11  
Parents: Steve & Nickolee  
Sub-Saharan African Peoples

## Encourage an MK with a card!

FOR SECURITY, cards will be forwarded. Please send all to: Child's name, Parent's name, **MBCB WMU MK Birthdays**, PO Box 530, Jackson MS 39205.



PLEASE NOTE: Church members may send a package of cards together; cards do not have to be sent individually to the WMU. Individual cards do not need postage stamps when sent as a package to MS.WMU.

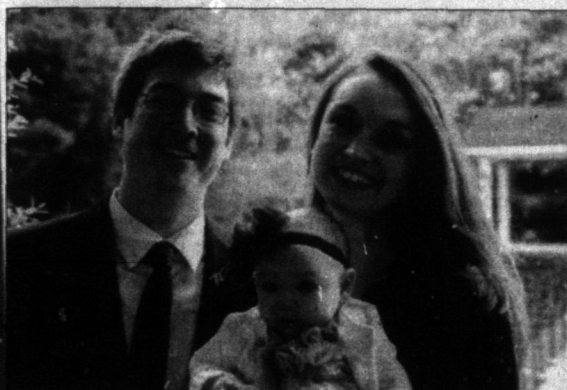
Please include your return address on each card envelope. MKs and their parents may wish to send you an update or note of appreciation.



# HOUSE TOPS



## Staff Changes



**WEST HEIGHTS CHURCH, PONTOTOC**, has called Robert Ekis as student minister. He is shown with his wife Amy and daughter Emma.



**INGRAM CHURCH, BALDWIN**, has called Jason Webb, Mooreville, as pastor. He is a graduate of Blue Mountain College with a Bachelor of Science in Church Related Vocations in 2009. He is married to Jessica (Worsham) Webb. The couple has two children, Eva Kate, 2, and Easton Gerald is on the way.

## Music leadership training course opens enrollment across Miss.

January begins the seventh of eight courses offered at seven locations in Mississippi sponsored by the Church Music Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB), in cooperation with the Providence Learning Center of New Orleans Seminary.

The seventh course, Church Music Resources, will meet once a week for two hours for eight consecutive weeks (Starkville and Brookhaven locations meet on Saturday) at the following locations and times:

■ **First Church, Cleveland** — beginning January 15 (5:30-7:30 p.m.) Alan Berry, teacher, (662) 843-2701.

■ **Northcrest Church, Meridian** — beginning January 14 (6-8 p.m.) Buddy McElroy, teacher. (601) 938-8668.

■ **Easthaven Church, Brookhaven** — January 26 (8 a.m.-noon) Four consecutive Saturdays. Mark Hamilton, teacher. (601) 835-6607.

■ **First Church, Starkville** — January 12 and 26 (9 a.m.-5 p.m., with lunch break) Tom Jenkins, teacher. (662) 323-5633.

■ **First Church, Booneville** — beginning January 22 (6:30-8:30 p.m.) LuAnne Ford, teacher. (662) 728-6272.

■ **Broadmoor Church, Madison** — beginning January 21 (6-8 p.m.) Jimmy McCaleb, teacher. (601) 924-1233.

■ **Handsboro Church** — beginning January

22 (6:30-8:30 p.m.) Louis White, teacher, (228) 896-3796.

The eight courses are Basic Conducting; Worship/Worship Planning; Reading Music: Rhythm/Pitch; Reading Music: Harmony/Melody; Songs and Hymns for Worship; Building Your Music Ministry; Church Music Resources; and Class Voice.

These courses are designed to provide basic training for bivocational music directors and other music leaders in churches. In most locations, the eight courses meet two hours per week with each course being eight weeks in length. Saturday locations may vary.

The cycle of courses is scheduled over a two-year period. Each course is independent and has no prerequisite. Each student who completes the eight courses earns a certificate from the Providence Learning Center of New Orleans Seminary.

There is a one-time enrollment fee of \$25.00. The cost of each course is \$100.00. A \$60.00 scholarship is available for all first-time students. Students already enrolled are not eligible. The grant is limited to one person per church.

For more information, contact the teachers listed above or Slater Murphy, MBCB Church Music Director, at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-3267 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 267. E-mail: smurphy@mbcb.org.

## PRAYER

cont. from p. 1

year, sharing historical insights about prayer and spiritual awakening; first person accounts about spiritual breakthroughs; organized prayer ministry initiatives such as GuideStone's Widow's Might; focused prayer reminders such as prayer for the U.S. Supreme Court justices as they consider the constitutionality of the Defense of Marriage Act and California's Proposition 8; as well as pastoral and theological reflections.

Page noted he is not alone in his call for prayer and spiritual

awakening. Earlier this year, current SBC president Fred Luter addressed the SBC Committee on Order of Business expressing his desire to see spiritual awakening and revival sweep across the SBC and the nation. Citing 2 Chronicles 7:14 and the high priestly prayer of Jesus recorded in John 17, Luter, pastor of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church in New Orleans, said it is his "heart's desire" for this convention to "work together as one."

"This will not happen unless there's passionate, purposeful revival," Luter told the commit-

tee. "My theme [for the 2013 SBC annual meeting] will be centered around revival and prayer.



LUTER

Prayer is the great equalizer, the great energizer."

Luter also has underscored the SBC Call to Prayer scheduled for the month of January. In a Baptist Press story today, Luter said the call to prayer is "a pivotal opportunity as churches cast a vision for ministry in 2013. This coming January we will have the chance to gather as a denomination and center our thoughts and prayers on the lost in our communities and around the world."

## Travel with other Baptists! Pacific Coastal Cruise & Tour



PORTS INCLUDE: SANTA BARBARA  
MONTEREY - SAN FRANCISCO  
ASTORIA, OR - VICTORIA, B.C.

**13 Days from \$1298\***

**Departs April 24, 2013**

Unique package includes two nights in Los Angeles; one night in San Diego; eight night cruise and one night in Seattle

Relax and unwind on board the 5-Star **Celebrity Century**. Sail to Santa Barbara, with great Spanish architecture; Monterey, with an incredible offshore kelp forest and San Francisco, offering many landmarks to explore such as Lombard Street and Alcatraz Island. Continue to Astoria, one of America's oldest settlements and Victoria, B.C., on Vancouver Island.

Exciting sightseeing tours in Los Angeles; Hollywood; San Diego and Seattle. Plus you will also visit the Space Shuttle Endeavour exhibit at the California Science Center and Cabrillo National Monument.

\*Per person, double occupancy; inside stateroom. Plus \$300 oceanview; \$600 balcony stateroom. Airfare is extra.

Final Reservations Now Being Taken with \$300 Deposits.



For reservations & details call 7 days a week:

**1-800-736-7300**

## Submission Guidelines

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs may be color or black and white. Instant photos and digital printouts

are not reproducible. Digital photos may be used if submitted as a JPEG file via either e-mail, CD or DVD. Photos must be clear, sharp, and well-lit. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items are generally not publishable. Photographs can not be returned. Please do not attach photos with tape or staples.

All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis.

Submit news and photographs to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.



## TORNADOES

cont. from p. 1

some damage on the border of Stone County and Pearl River County. I saw one mobile home that had just disintegrated, and the family who lived in that mobile home was at a family member's house. Their whole roof was taken off."

Gann said that Central Church in McNeil had several church members with home damage. "Their pastor had been there 13 years, and it was sweet seeing how much those folks appreciated seeing their pastor as he checked on them."

"As far as immediate response, we started the afternoon of the 26th," said Myers. "Some individuals were involved, but we got started putting down tarps. The chain-saw team of 13 from Yalobusha worked with us for four days and a team from Gulf Coast Association worked for three-and-a-half days. We tarped ten roofs, and we put wood strips down on one roof where an individual had put down a tarp."

The McNeil fire department coordinated relief supplies and are still doing that, Myers stated. "We opened one of our lodges at the association for folks, but no one came. So

we had a team in cooking for the volunteers. There is still plenty of follow-up to be done. Some of the people who lost homes had insurance, but some didn't. I'm not sure how all that is going to flesh out. When you have folks who are looking at a total rebuild and they don't have insurance, I don't know where you start."

"It's that old adage about tornadoes — it's a miracle no one was killed," Myers said. "One elderly lady in her 80's

**"Their [Central Church's] pastor had been there 13 years, and it was sweet seeing how much those folks appreciated seeing their pastor as he checked on them."**

**Don Gann**

**Men's Ministry Department, Mississippi Baptist Convention Board**

was sitting in a chair in her living room and her whole house just disintegrated. Her face was hit by debris. A good number of bones in her face were broken, and she spent three days in intensive care. Hers was the worst injury. "Another one of our churches, Pine Grove, has done some great follow-up as far as individual contacts. They were involved with the McNeil fire department in meeting some needs. But people don't need a whole lot because they're staying with friends and family. While Yalobusha was helping in one yard, neighbors were helping with others. One house had 22 large pine trees that were snapped off and there were pine tops everywhere. So a lot of people had friends and family to help clean up."

## Correction:

► In a page one article in the Jan. 3 issue of The Baptist Record, a reporter incorrectly identified Kara Blackard as the retired former pastor of Wheeler Grove Church, Corinth. Blackard is not retired and continues to serve as pastor of the church. The Baptist Record regrets the error.

## BIBL i O C I P H E R

Y SECXES YS XCCA SC PEG L SEG

PYXHP WHA LCHAGDP SEWS SEG EYXE

XCA EWSE LDCOXES SCLWDA UG.

AWHYGR KCOD: SLC

**Clue: S = T**

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Isaiah Forty:Eight

By Charles Marx, 1932-2004, © 2005

## NIGERIA

cont. from p. 1

strict version of Islamic law. Boko Haram is also suspected in a Dec. 1 raid on the village of Chibok in northeastern Nigeria, when militants entered private homes and slit the throats of 10 Christians, including a pastor. Separate attacks set fire to three churches, a police station, and an immigration and customs office, according to the reports.

On Nov. 25, an attack including two suicide bombs at St. Andrew's Military Protestant Church in Jaji killed 11 people and wounded 30 others, Morning Star News reported.

Ojutiku, a member of Providence Baptist Church in Raleigh, N.C., is co-founder of the nonprofit Lift Up Now Foundation, a religious, social, economic, and political justice outreach to Nigeria. Lift Up Now, with a Nigerian membership that Ojutiku numbers at 2,500, is among several entities encouraging the U.S. Congress to declare Boko Haram a "designated foreign terrorist organization," with the aim of weakening the group's ability to attract money and military weapons.

Already, the U.S. State Department has listed three top Boko Haram leaders as "specially designated global terrorists," which Ojutiku said has had "immediate and sweeping" effects on Nigeria's political leadership.

Lift Up Now compiled in 2001, and continues to update, a catalog of Boko Haram attacks. In the past decade, Boko Haram has killed approximately 4,000 people and dismembered or seriously injured thousands more, according to Lift Up Now's count.

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## OBITUARY

**FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)** — Justice Anderson, 83, a Southern Baptist missionary in Argentina for 17 years who later founded Southwestern Seminary's World Missions Center, died Dec. 29. Funeral services were Jan. 2 in Ft. Worth. Anderson and his wife Mary Ann were Southern Baptist missionaries to Argentina from 1959-74. During that time, Anderson served as professor of church history and homiletics at the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Buenos Aires. Additionally, he served as vice president of the Argentine Baptist Convention in 1962 and 1965 and interim president of the seminary from 1968-69. After returning from the mission field, Anderson

joined Southwestern's faculty as the George W. Bottoms professor of mission. The World Missions Center he founded in 1980 and led for 20 years continues to be a training site for future missionaries as well as a catalyst for engaging students and faculty on campus in mission trips and missions education. Anderson authored a three-volume Spanish-language Baptist history, along with various other books and articles in both Spanish and English, according to the Baptist Standard newsjournal in Dallas. He is survived by his wife of 63 years, Mary Ann; two daughters; two sons; 11 grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren.

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## Need a light?

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life." (John 8:12)

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Christ today, contact a local Southern Baptist church for spiritual guidance.



# Unseal the Indictment • Amos 1:1-2; 2:6-8; 3:6-8, 13-15

If there is any word we are all familiar with, it is the word "accountability." We have a television news network in our state that searches for "Who's Accountable" when a problem or public event occurs. The problem is that no one wants to admit they are accountable for anything. Most secular-minded adults refuse to admit or recognize that they are even accountable to God for the way they live. Not only do most adults not accept being accountable to God, but they also take offense over being held to Biblical standards of right and wrong. Such is the case in the observations of the prophet Amos. The people of God have refused to live by the standards God had set for them. God has called the prophet Amos to bring before the people His indictment against them.

## Hear Ye! Hear Ye! (Amos 1:1-2)

The words of the prophet Amos ring out as a warning to the people of Judah, Israel, and to the surrounding nations. Amos was by trade a sheep breeder from the region of Tekoa. (vi) My pastor describes Amos as a "good ole country preacher." In Amos 7: 14-15, we find Amos defending his call to deliver God's message in Israel. He states that he was not a prophet or the son of a prophet, but just a herdsman and a tender of sycamore trees. Whatever his background,

God had called him to deliver His message to the people. God's people had wandered far from the path of living a godly life, especially in the way they treated each other. God was on the verge of bringing judgment on His people and holding them accountable for their actions. As we have already learned from our study of Hosea, God will use people and other means of His choosing to hold us accountable for living as He has instructed us.



## Explore the Bible with Huey Dedmon

## You've Been Warned (Amos 3: 6-8)

There have been many times in my life when I was given fair warning but refused to heed that warning. Because of that, I suffered the punishment or affliction I deserved. Amos wanted his listeners to know that the coming disaster would be God's punishment on them for not heeding His warning. The word translated as "disaster" in verse six can refer to a natural disaster or to other adversities. Most likely, as revealed in verse eleven of chapter three, it refers to

suffering defeat at the hands of an enemy army. Amos also reveals in verse seven that God does not punish His people without first warning them through His servants the prophets. The warning has been given and the punishment is on the way. Their responsibility now is to heed the warning and turn to God in repentance.

## Accountability Comes Knocking (Amos 3: 13-15)

I am not sure I can say things have changed much in the world today. God's prophets, preachers, and teachers are still delivering God's warning message and we are still not paying attention. Amos has revealed to us the heart of God. He has pronounced His judgment on His people for their lust for wealth and gratification of their fleshly desires. Through Hosea we see that God has the heart of a redeeming father, and now through Amos we see that God also has the heart of a righteous judge. We can no longer go on in our sinful ways. We are all sinners and in need of His mercy. God will fulfill His promises of both grace and punishment for disobedient living.

Dedmon is Associate Pastor for Education/Outreach at Brandon Church, Brandon.

# Habakkuk: A Message of Faith • Habakkuk 1-3

Habakkuk in one sentence: You better believe that God is large and in charge and is never up to no good.

Six hundred BC. Times were tough all over. Israel had been conquered by the Assyrians. With the Babylonian destruction of Nineveh, the capital city of Assyria (last week's lesson from Nahum), hope raised her flag for a few short years. Judah experienced spiritual renewal and revival in the days of young King Josiah. With the untimely death of Josiah and the back-to-sinful-business-as-usual reign of King Jehoiakim, things were on the wrong track once again. By her determined disobedience, Judah was headed for her own downfall and captivity at the hands of the Babylonians.

Habakkuk found himself in the lackluster and thankless position of standing in the gap on behalf of the people of Judah. This tiny, three-chapter book contains his personal meeting with God and the exact words (complete with God quotation marks!) of their passionate, intimate dialogue. Many of the Old Testament prophets spend their time proclaiming their recently received Word from God to the people. Habakkuk takes us with him to the woodshed where he gets his marching orders along with a stiff dose of "come-uppance" from the Lord of the Universe.

Those who have outlined the book of

Habakkuk usually focus on the chapter settings as they progress from the valley to the tower to the mountaintop. The closer we get to God, the less of ourselves we can take with us. The higher we move toward God and His holy presence, the lower we must bow in honor. The nearer we get to

God, our "whinings" are replaced with the exuberance of our praises. Habakkuk learned that lesson. So should we. Movement toward God always increases our understanding of the plan and purposes of God. Sincere "whys" are permitted. Even Jesus asked "WHY?" from the cross!

Habakkuk means "to embrace." I call him Hava-hug or Hava-hug-back. The more Habakkuk embraced the message that God was communicating, the more he felt that embrace from God. He began to relax into the knowledge that God knew everything: past, present and future. God knew about the sinfulness of the nation of Judah. He could not

continue to tolerate it. God knew about the future of the nation. He knew that it would take the captivity of His people in the land of Babylon to finally get their full and undivided attention. God knew that He had perfectly prepared Babylon to be the enemy that would complete the

task. Several Old Testament prophets were given the exact assignment as Habakkuk. The nation of Judah would give birth to the

promised Messiah. God's purpose of salvation was at stake.

All the way through their awkward conversation, I could observe God slowly, but patiently, putting His loving arms around Habakkuk and drawing him into a hug of assurance. I am certain that Habakkuk felt that hug because he convened the hearing whining and complaining and adjourned their time with praising and rejoicing.

Things were STILL tough at the very end of the book. Nothing had changed about the situation. The people of God

were about to be delivered into the hands of the wicked Babylonians. God was going to let this happen! The one thing that changed in this book was the major understanding of this minor prophet. Where you and I are concerned, the message of Habakkuk is all about perspective. God is large and in charge and He is never up to no good. The sooner we understand this truth, the better.

Musically speaking, Habakkuk begins in a dark, minor key of "woes" and "whys" and "hows." Chapter two muddles along through a series of conversational interludes that show tiny hints of joyful resolution. The bright key change from minor to major is obvious at the beginning of chapter three. The final part of this song deserves its own title and choir and orchestra instructions. Some would argue the title should be "Don't Worry, Be Happy." I disagree. Good or bad, God calls us to trust Him no matter the nature of the events which surround us. This is NOT serendipity or pollyanna or happily ever after living. The Eternal Living God is working ALL things for our good and His ultimate glory. Our response must be to watch, wait, walk, work and worship. Footsteps of faithful followers leave HIMprints in the sand.

Brown is the staff evangelist at First Church, Richland.

## Bible Studies for Life with Becky Brown



## HICKS

cont. from p.2

Allen Stephens, associational missions director (AMD) for Rankin Association in Brandon;

Courtney Selvy, AMD for Panola Association in Batesville; Phillip Price, AMD for Jackson Association in Pascagoula; Steve Mooneyham, AMD for Gulf Coast Association in Gulfport; and Dionne Williams, associate

MD for Gulf Coast Association. Your Discipleship and Family Ministry Department at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, or any of these key leaders, would love to help you plan practical ways your association

and your church can train older children to share their faith effectively and confidently.

What is the future of Mississippi? Our Children, especially our preteen Christian children, need to be disciplined to witness.

Hicks is the preschool/children's consultant in the Discipleship and Family Ministry Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board. He may be contacted at dhicks@mbeeb.org.

## Just for the Record



**PARKER CHURCH, WATER VALLEY**, burned the note on their fellowship hall Dec. 31. The building was paid off three years early.



**JONES CHAPEL CHURCH, NETTLETON**, delivered 160 teddy bears and stuffed animals to the Golden Living Center in Amory. The teddy bears were blessed with prayer by pastor Corey Hall, eight children, and seven adults from the church.



**ARKADELPHIA CHURCH, BAILEY**, crocheted and delivered ten plastic bag sleeping mats to a local shelter. The church's WMU ladies are teaching other area mission groups how to create these mats.



The senior citizens of **CALVARY CHURCH, BOGUE CHITTO**, enjoyed their Christmas party at a local restaurant. Hal Hatten, pastor.



The youth of **NESHOBA CHURCH, UNION**, presented Gifts, a production with puppets, humans, and talking mice.



The GAs from **TILLATOBA CHURCH, TILLATOBA**, took part in the GA World Beautiful Feet Photo Challenge.

### In other Church News:

► **Corinth Church, Heidelberg**, will host gospel group The Revelations Jan. 19, 6 p.m. Love offering.

► **Pine Grove Church, Magee**, is having a concert and conference Jan. 19, 6 p.m. and Jan. 20, 9 a.m., followed by lunch. Singers featured are Caley Lewis, Bob Thames, Elkins Trio, Tri-Harmony, and Still Waters. Donnie Guy, speaker.

► **First Church, Runnelstown**, will host The McKameys in concert. Love offering. For more information, call (601) 583-3733.



**GRACE FELLOWSHIP CHURCH, LEXINGTON**, became the owners of a building situated on 1.3 acres of land formerly owned by Faith Fellowship Church of God. The church was purchased with funds donated by an anonymous owner. The church was chartered by 15 members May 9, 2012. Shown are members gathered Dec. 23.